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[Josh Green, M.D.](#)  
Governor

[John De Fries](#)  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Statement of  
**JOHN DE FRIES**  
Hawai'i Tourism Authority  
before the  
**COMMITTEE ON TOURISM**

Tuesday, February 7, 2023  
10:00 a.m.  
State Capitol Conference Room 423 & Videoconference

In consideration of  
**HOUSE BILL NO. 1239**  
**RELATING TO TOURISM**

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Aloha Chair Quinlan, Vice Chair Hussey-Burdick, and members of the Committee on Tourism,

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) appreciates the opportunity to offer comments on HB1239 which establishes the position of the Tourism Liaison Officer within the Office of the Governor.

We generally appreciate the intent of elevating the challenges and opportunities related to tourism to the Governor's attention. In at least one previous administration, a previous governor had a tourism liaison in her office that worked well with HTA and the visitor industry.

In this measure's current form, the Tourism Liaison Officer seems to have some duties and responsibilities that duplicate those of HTA's Board of Directors, HTA's President & Chief Executive Officer, and the Director of the Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism.

As other bills under consideration this session would alter the governance structure of HTA, it will be important to consider the Tourism Liaison Officer's role in context with other changes. It is also important to be clear about lines of authority and reporting structure.

We respectfully suggest that a study of alternative models of tourism governance, such as the one called for in HB1381, would be a valuable, prudent step to take ahead of making structural changes to the State of Hawai'i's current mechanism of managing the visitor industry.

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide these comments on HB1239.



**HAWAI'I LODGING & TOURISM**  
**A S S O C I A T I O N**

Testimony of  
Mufi Hannemann  
President & CEO  
Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association

House Committee on Tourism  
House Bill 1239  
February 7, 2023

Chair Quinlan and members of the Committee, mahalo for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association, the state's largest and oldest private sector visitor industry organization.

The Hawai'i Lodging & Tourism Association—nearly 700 members strong, representing more than 50,000 hotel rooms and nearly 40,000 lodging workers—**supports House Bill 1239** as it would ultimately lead to more collaboration and a more efficient and synergistic relationship between the State government and the private sector.

HLTA feels strongly that both coalition-building and collaboration are key to the success of our local tourism industry. Throughout the pandemic, we successfully brought together various stakeholders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to address myriad issues, and we found that these shared efforts were highly effective.

Establishing the position of a Tourism Liaison Officer would accomplish much of the same while also directing a laser-like focus from the Governor's administration on our industry and its place in our economy and our community.

For these reasons, HLTA supports House 1239.

Mahalo for the opportunity to offer this testimony.



February 6, 2023

Representative Sean Quinlan, Chair  
House Committee on Tourism  
Hawaii State Legislature

**Support for HB1239**

Dear Chair Quinlan and Members of the House Committee on Tourism,

The Kohala Coast Resort Association is in support of HB1239, establishing the position of Tourism Liaison Officer within the Office of the Governor. We found it was incredibly helpful to have Marsha Wienert in a similar role during Governor Linda Lingle's administration, and would like to see a similar position under Governor Green.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this measure.

The Kohala Coast Resort Association's members employ 5,000 people, supporting 20,000 Hawaii Island residents, at their hotels, timeshares, restaurants, retail shops, golf courses and spas along the Kohala Coast. Additionally, in 2022, KCRA members paid \$40 million in state and county TAT, and \$40 million in state and county GET.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie P. Donoho". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Donoho, Administrative Director